# Unnatural doubts

For *Skepticism: Historical and Contemporary Inquiries,*
(eds.) G. A. Bruno & A. Rutherford, (Routledge).

# UNNATURAL DOUBTS

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ABSTRACT. The goal of this paper is to critique the prominent *inferential contextualist* response to radical scepticism offered by Michael Williams. A core criticism is that Williams fails to recognise that the sceptical problem that he engages with is not a single problem at all, but rather two logically distinct difficulties which trade on separate sceptical claims. It is further argued that the Wittgenstein-inspired account of "methodological necessities" that Williams offers is fundamentally flawed, and that he would have been better to have stuck more closely to Wittgenstein's own characterisation of hinge commitments. Inferential contextualism is also independently shown to be problematic in various ways, not least in the manner in which it is in danger of collapsing into a form of epistemic relativism. It is argued that the right way to deal with the sceptical problem involves allying a Wittgensteinian account of the structure of rational evaluation with a radical thesis about the nature of perceptual knowledge in paradigm epistemic conditions, known as *epistemological disjunctivism*.

## 0. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In my view, Michael Williams's magisterial book on Cartesian radical scepticism, *Unnatural Doubts* (Williams 1991), is one of the most important works in epistemology, if not philosophy more generally, of the last fifty years.[1] Indeed, it is one of two books on the subject by living philosophers that have between them shaped much of my thinking about the problem. The other is Barry Stroud's (1984) seminal monograph, *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism*, a book which resurrected radical scepticism as a *bona fide* philosophical problem, and which arguably provided much of the philosophical context for *Unnatural Doubts*. In short, Stroud resurrected the problem of radical scepticism, and then Williams came along and offered a highly compelling response to this difficulty. Like Williams, my ultimate concern is to undermine radical scepticism; to show that it is in an important sense a 'fake' philosophical problem, in that while it wears the cloak of commonsense it in fact trades on dubious theoretical claims that should be rejected. Here we both

depart from Stroud, despite our common sympathy for his presentation of both the problem itself and why it is philosophically significant. Like Williams, my way of thinking about radical scepticism is also influenced by Wittgenstein's (1969) gnomic remarks in *On Certainty* on the nature of knowledge and certainty. But while there is a lot to admire in Williams's treatment of the sceptical problem, and while there are also important commonalities in our respective ways of responding to this difficulty, I also think that Williams's response to radical scepticism goes awry at critical junctures, and this is the topic of the paper.

To this end we will be exploring the anti-sceptical proposal that Williams puts forward, what I have elsewhere described as *inferential contextualism*.[2] In particular, the goal is to identify what Williams's gets right in his response to radical scepticism, and also to pick out those points on which he errs. Before we can get to Williams's proposal, however, we first need to describe the Wittgensteinian account of the structure of rational evaluation and the related notion of a hinge commitment, as this provides the crucial context both for understanding Williams's view, and also for understanding why it does not achieve its intended target.

## 1. WITTGENSTEIN ON THE STRUCTURE OF RATIONAL EVALUATION

In his final notebooks, published as *On Certainty* [OC], Wittgenstein offers us a strikingly original account of the structure of rational evaluation. Central to this proposal is the idea of *hinge commitments*. These concern that which we are optimally certain of, the so-called 'Moorean' propositions, such as 'I have two hands'. Moore (1925; 1939) noted that the optimal certainty that we accord to such propositions seems to allow them to play an important epistemic role our practices of epistemic evaluation. But while Moore thought that this optimal certainty revealed a special kind of epistemic status, Wittgenstein instead argues that the exact opposite is the case, in that our hinge commitments are essentially groundless. Indeed, not only are they essentially groundless, but they cannot be subject to rational doubt either. This is because they form the framework relative to which any rational evaluation occurs, whether positive or negative.

As we might expect from unedited notebooks containing impressionistic remarks, Wittgenstein doesn't offer a straightforward argument for this account of our hinge commitments. Rather he offers a series of examples that highlight the implausibility both of doubt of a hinge commitment being rational and of the idea that we could regard such commitments as rationally grounded. Consider the following passage:

> If a blind man were to ask me "Have you got two hands?" I should not make sure by looking. If I

> were to have any doubt of it, then I don't know why I should trust my eyes. For why shouldn't I test my *eyes* by looking to find out whether I see my two hands? *What* is to be tested by *what*? (OC, §125)

Wittgenstein is suggesting that doubt of that which is optimally certain cannot be rational because it throws into question one's entire system of beliefs, and thus the very putative rational basis of the doubt itself. Such a doubt, he writes, would "drag everything with it and plunge it into chaos." (OC, §613) Doubt of a Moorean certainty is deemed akin to doubting everything, but Wittgenstein cautions that:

> If you tried to doubt everything you would not get as far as doubting anything. The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty. (OC, §115)

And elsewhere, "A doubt that doubted everything would not be a doubt." (OC, §450; cf. OC, §§370; 490; 613)

Something must thus stand fast for rational doubt to occur, and this is our bedrock of hinge commitments. But, crucially, Wittgenstein further argues—contrary to a certain brand of broadly Moorean anti-scepticism—that it does not follow that these hinge commitments have a special rational grounding, but rather that just as they cannot be rationally doubted, so they cannot be coherently thought of as rationally grounded either. Consider the following passage:

> My having two hands is, in normal circumstances, as certain as anything that I could produce in evidence for it.
>
> That is why I am not in a position to take the sight of my hand as evidence for it. (OC, §250)

That is, just as one cannot make sense of a rational basis for doubt of a hinge commitment, for the very same reason one cannot make sense of a rational basis for belief of a hinge commitment either. Such commitments are thus essentially arational.

Relatedly, Wittgenstein also emphasises the point that our hinge commitments are neither acquired via rational processes nor responsive to rational considerations in the way that normal beliefs are. We've already the noted the latter point, in that we've seen how our hinge commitments are simply not responsive to rational considerations in the usual way—e.g., they are not susceptible to being undermined by rational doubt. Indeed, our hinge commitments are, instead, completely non-optional, and represent a visceral, "animal" (OC, §359), certainty. On the former point, Wittgenstein points out that we are never explicitly taught our hinge commitments, but we rather "swallow them down" in other things that we are taught. No one teaches you that you have two hands, for example, but lots of things that you are taught presuppose this commitment. In a similar vein, Wittgenstein notes that it takes a very special kind of inquiry—one that is specifically philosophical in nature—to bring our hinge commitments to the fore. In the

normal run of things, they "lie apart from the route travelled by inquiry." (OC, §88)

Putting all these points together, Wittgenstein argues for the necessity of hinge commitments for there to be rational evaluation, and thus he contends that—as a 'matter of logic'—all rational evaluation is essentially local. Consider these famous remarks on our hinge commitments:

> [...] the *questions* that we raise and our *doubts* depend upon the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn.
>
> That is to say, it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigations that certain things are *in deed* not doubted.
>
> But it isn't that the situation is like this: We just *can't* investigate everything, and for that reason we are forced to rest content with assumption. If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put. (OC, §§341-3)[3]

This point about how rational evaluation must be this way is very important to Wittgenstein's anti-scepticism, but it is often overlooked. Wittgenstein is quite emphatic that it is not a mere practical limitation on rational evaluation that he has in mind, such that if only we were cleverer, more imaginative, more conscientious, and so forth, then we would be able to make sense of the idea of a fully general rational evaluation. That these hinges stand fast for me, Wittgenstein (OC, §235) writes, is not "grounded in my stupidity or credulity." (OC, §235) Rather his point is that the very idea of a fully general rational evaluation—i.e., a rational evaluation that isn't relative to hinge commitments that are immune to rational evaluation—simply doesn't make sense.[4]

## 2. INFERENTIAL CONTEXTUALISM

In the last section we saw the basic elements of Wittgenstein's hinge-based response to radical scepticism. How should we go about converting this radical idea about the structure of rational evaluation into a coherent anti-sceptical thesis? One influential response to this question is the *inferential contextualism* advanced by Williams (1991), which is built around this general Wittgensteinian anti-sceptical line.

Williams agrees with Wittgenstein that all rational evaluation takes place relative to arational hinge commitments—or "methodological necessities" (Williams 1991, 123) as he describes them—such that there can no such thing as fully general rational evaluations. He accordingly rejects what he refers to as the "totality condition" (Williams 1991, 90) that is implicit in the traditional epistemological enterprise, such that it is possible to rationally evaluate all our beliefs at once. Williams further argues that the Cartesian sceptical problem essentially trades on the idea that fully general rational evaluations are possible, and hence that a rejection of the totality

conditions is thereby a rejection of this form of radical scepticism. Indeed, in a Wittgensteinian spirit Williams claims that radical scepticism is not the paradox that it purports to be, but rather trades on dubious theoretical claims masquerading as commonsense. Williams is therefore proposing what is known as an *undercutting* anti-sceptical strategy, one that has methodological necessities at its heart. That is, he is not granting that there is a *bona fide* paradox in play here and then motivating a revisionary epistemology to evade it (this would be an *overriding* anti-sceptical strategy), but rather aiming to show that once we clear-up our thinking about radical scepticism we discover that there is no sceptical paradox to evade.[5]

Williams further argues that in accepting the Wittgensteinian line on hinges, and thus denying the totality condition, one is thereby also rejecting a metaphysical claim about the objects of epistemological study, a claim that he refers to as *epistemological realism*. This is the view that a proposition can have an inherent epistemic status in virtue of its content. In particular, Williams is especially interested in the idea, which he refers to as *epistemic priority*, that propositions concerning the 'inner' realm of one's own mind (e.g., regarding one's current mental states) have a privileged epistemic status relative to propositions concerning the 'outer' realm of an empirical world (e.g., regarding one's immediate environment). Although Williams is never fully explicit about what he has in mind with regard to epistemic priority, we can get a good feel for his intentions from this passage:

> Beliefs to which no beliefs are epistemologically prior are epistemologically basic. Their credibility is naturally intrinsic, as that of all other beliefs is naturally inferential. (Williams 1991, 116)

Whether or not claims about the inner realm are epistemologically basic, they are at least typically thought to be epistemologically prior to claims about the outer realm in this sense: the rational basis for an instance of the latter kind of claim must involve an inference from an instance of the former kind of claim. So, for example, rationally grounded knowledge that there is chair in front of one must be based on an inference from one's beliefs about one's mental states (e.g., regarding one's experiences as of there being a chair before one).[6]

Williams rejects epistemic priority. For Williams, what can be legitimately inferred relative to what is determined by the methodological necessities in play, and these vary from context to context. Thus while there may be contexts in which, say, one can only rationally infer external world claims from propositions regarding one's mental states, there is no necessity in play here for there can be other contexts, no less legitimate, in which one can reasonably infer claims about one's mental states from claims regarding the external world. This is why Williams's view can be described as inferential contextualism.[7]

More generally, Williams wants to reject not just epistemic priority but also the more

general thesis of epistemological realism. That is, not only is there not the kind of inherent epistemic status due to propositions of a certain type when it comes to the 'inner/outer' dichotomy, but there is also no such thing as an inherent epistemic status *simpliciter*. For Williams, inferential contextualism is just the denial of epistemological realism. As he puts it, it is the view that

> […] the epistemic status of a given proposition is liable to shift with situational, disciplinary and other contextually variable factors: it is to hold that, independently of such influences, a proposition has no epistemic status whatsoever. (Williams 1991, 119)

So to reject epistemological realism is to endorse inferential contextualism, and to reject inferential contextualism is to endorse epistemological realism.

We thus have the main contours of inferential contextualism. At its heart is the Wittgensteinian claim that all rational evaluation takes place relative to groundless hinge commitments, and that this is key to dissolving the radical sceptical problem. But Williams also argues that a denial of epistemological realism and epistemic priority is also required, and that the rejection of these theses falls out of the Wittgensteinian anti-sceptical picture.

There is a lot in Williams's approach to radical scepticism that I agree with. As we will see, I also endorse the basic Wittgensteinian line that all rational evaluation is essentially local, in that it takes place relative to rationally groundless hinge commitments. Like Williams, I would thus also reject the totality condition. In addition, I agree with Williams that we should aspire to formulate an undercutting treatment of radical scepticism that demonstrates that the putative sceptical paradox is not *bona fide*. That said, there are also several fundamental points that I think Williams's approach to radical scepticism gets wrong.

To begin with, although I would also reject epistemic priority, I don't think that one can motivate a rejection of this claim by appeal to the Wittgensteinian thesis about the structure of rational evaluation. Rather, the explanation for why this claim should be rejected lies elsewhere. Relatedly, I don't think one can motivate the rejection of epistemological realism by appeal to the Wittgensteinian thesis either. Indeed, I don't think that rejecting this claim has any essential role to play in undermining this form of radical scepticism.

There are two key junctures where Williams's anti-scepticism goes awry. The first is the way in which he interprets the Wittgensteinian account of our hinge commitments. As we will see, there is a better way of understanding Wittgenstein's account of the structure of rational evaluation that doesn't lead to inferential contextualism (and which is also less susceptible to epistemic relativism). The second is that Williams makes a common error in his treatment of radical scepticism in effectively running together two formulations of this problem, cast in terms of the underdetermination and closure principles.[8] As we will see, these two formulations are

importantly different, with the Wittgensteinian approach to radical scepticism, properly understood, only really applicable to the latter. By effectively trying to extract a solution to both formulations by appeal only to a hinge epistemology, Williams ends up with a response to radical scepticism that has an important lacuna. We will be taking these two points in turn.

## 3. *CONTRA* METHODOLOGICAL NECESSITIES

The kind of examples of hinge commitments that Wittgenstein offers us can, at first blush anyway, make them seem like an heterogeneous bunch. Accordingly, we might wonder what they have in common, aside from the fact that they concern propositions that we are optimally certain about. I think there is a straightforward way of de-mystifying the nature of our hinge commitments, however. The way to do this is to recognise that all of our hinge commitments essentially codify, and thus manifest, our fundamental hinge commitment that we are not radically and fundamentally mistaken in our beliefs. Call this the *über* hinge commitment.

There are a number of advantages of thinking about our hinge commitments in this way.[9] For example, one key advantage is that it helps us to see why rational evaluation must be essentially local. For what possible reason could we have for holding the *über* hinge commitment? Whatever grounds we cited would already presuppose the truth of this commitment after all. Notice, too, that this way of thinking about our hinge commitments underlines Wittgenstein's point that there is nothing contingent about the limitation on rational evaluation that the existence of our hinge commitments reveals. It is not as though, for example, if we had been more careful or thorough in how we acquired rational support for our beliefs then we could have avoided this fate, since there simply is no rational process through which we could have gained rational support for belief in the *über* hinge proposition. And since we are unable to have a rationally supported belief in the *über* hinge proposition, it follows that we are unable to have rationally supported beliefs in the various other more specific commitments that we have which codify our *über* hinge commitment. We thus get the Wittgensteinian conclusion: since all rational evaluation necessarily takes place relative to groundless hinge commitments, hence the very idea of a fully general rational evaluation—i.e., one which does not presuppose any hinge commitments—is incoherent, whether that evaluation is positive (i.e., anti-sceptical) or negative (i.e., sceptical). The universality of rational evaluation thesis is thus rejected.

Williams's conception of hinge propositions as methodological necessities is very different to the conception of hinges just offered. For example, Williams regards methodological necessities as being dependent on the kind of inquiry one is engaging in. So, to take an example that Williams

is fond of, consider the methodological necessities in play when we are conducting an historical inquiry:

> For a subject like history, there is more to method than abstract procedural rules. This is because the exclusion of certain questions (about the existence of the Earth, the complete and total unreliability of documentary evidence, etc.) amounts to the acceptance of substantial factual commitments. These commitments, which must be accepted, if what we understand by historical inquiry at all, have the status, relative to that form of inquiry, of *methodological necessities*. (Williams 1991, 123, *italics in original*)

The methodological necessities of historical inquiry will thus include claims about the reality of the past and about the reliability of documentary evidence, where these claims are not methodological necessities of some other kinds of inquiry. Hence, a change in one's inquiries can lead to a change in one's methodological necessities, and thus one's hinge commitments.

We should note straight away one feature of Williams' conception of hinge commitments that is very much in tension with the way Wittgenstein describes these commitments in *On Certainty*.[10] Which inquiries one undertakes is a matter of *choice*, after all, and hence on this view which methodological necessities one has at a particular point of time can be a matter of choice too, at least insofar as one is aware that certain inquiries demand certain methodological necessities. But can we really make sense of our hinge commitments as being *optional* in this way? Isn't the commitment in play meant to be visceral, an 'animal' commitment? How could we square this way of thinking about hinge commitments with them being optional?

We can further bring out the odd nature of Williams's conception of hinge commitments by asking what sort of inquiry would lack any of the methodological necessities that Williams claims is distinctive of history. The way that Williams writes about methodological necessities suggests that there ought to be a range of inquiries which don't incorporate any of these commitments—they are particular to a specifically historical inquiry, after all. And yet once one reflects on the matter, it is hard to think of a specific inquiry that doesn't, for example, presuppose the reality of the past. Aren't commitments such as this simply consequences of the *über* hinge commitment? And if so, doesn't this mean that they are entirely general hinge commitments, and not relative to a particular kind of inquiry? Moreover, so conceived, shouldn't they have the same kind of properties as our other hinge commitments, such as being non-optional (etc.,)?[11]

Tellingly, the only inquiry which Williams offers as an example of an investigation which lacks any of the methodological necessities involved in doing history is that of the traditional epistemological enterprise, where by this he means the kind of fully general rational evaluation of our epistemic standing which is undertaken by the radical sceptic and the conventional (e.g., Moorean) anti-sceptic. A key part of Williams's diagnosis of radical scepticism is the observation that there is a sense in which scepticism is correct, albeit not (as it purports to be) as an

acontextual thesis, but only relative to a particular set of methodological necessities. In particular, Williams argues that a hinge commitment to epistemological realism underlies traditional epistemology, and hence underlies the sceptical challenge too, such that it is only relative to this ungrounded methodological necessity that sceptical inquiry can take place. Here is Williams:

> The sceptic takes himself to have discovered, under the conditions of philosophical reflection, that knowledge of the world is impossible. But in fact, the most he has discovered is that knowledge of the world is *impossible under the conditions of philosophical reflection.* (Williams 1991, 130, *italics in original)*

We thus get another sense in which Williams is a contextualist, for not only are methodological necessities relative to contexts more generally, but also there is a specific context in which scepticism itself is legitimate. As we might put it, there is, on Williams's view, a truth in radical scepticism, although it is not quite the truth that the radical sceptic herself offers.

This is a general move that contextualist anti-sceptical strategies make of course, though there is a crucial difference between standard contextualism and Williams's inferential contextualism. For usually the contextualist idea is that the context in which radical scepticism is presented involves higher epistemic standards with regards to knowledge ascriptions. There is thus a hierarchy of contexts differentiated in terms of the epistemic standards they employ.[12] In contrast, for Williams there is no such anti-sceptical appeal to a raising of epistemic standards. In particular, contexts for Williams are not ordered in terms of a hierarchy of epistemic standards. Rather each context incorporates its own internal epistemic standards, as determined by the methodological necessities, and hence inferential structure, in play. Indeed, since all epistemic evaluation is relative to some context or other (and thus to some particular set of methodological necessities), on Williams's view there is simply no sense in the idea that we can rank contexts in terms how epistemically demanding they are, as the attributer contextualist supposes. For this would be to undertake the very kind of extra-contextual epistemic evaluation that Williams claims is impossible.

Although Williams's rejection of an epistemic hierarchy of contexts is more Wittgensteinian in spirit than standard contextualism, there is nonetheless something deeply suspect about allying the Wittgensteinian account of the structure of rational evaluation to contextualism of any variety. For although there are obviously no rational constraints on what can count as a methodological necessity—since they are by their nature immune to rational evaluation—even on Williams's view the methodological necessities must be true if that context is to yield rationally grounded knowledge. But if Williams has shown, on purely *a priori* grounds, that epistemological realism is false, then it follows that the sceptical context is simply defunct (i.e., relative to *any* inferential context). There is thus nothing for the sceptic to 'discover' as part of

their epistemological inquiry. Discovery implies knowledge, after all, and since the methodological necessities of this context are false no knowledge can be produced by it (not even of a qualified context-dependent form).

Indeed, notice that we do not have to go so far as to accept Williams's rejection of epistemological realism in order to make this point. The rejection, on Wittgensteinian grounds, of the very idea of a fully general rational evaluation will suffice by itself to undermine the project of traditional epistemological inquiry as Williams understands it—i.e., such that it essentially incorporates the totality condition. This means that the rejection of the totality condition is enough to ensure that the radical sceptic's context is epistemically illegitimate—such that radical sceptical reasoning cannot lead to rationally grounded knowledge—even if it turns out that epistemological realism is true. (Or, at least, this would be so if we were entitled to accept, with Williams, that there is just one kind of sceptical problem in play here, and therefore that only one diagnosis is needed—we will return to this point below).

Once we reject the idea of there being a *bona fide* radical sceptical context—in the sense of potentially generating rationally grounded knowledge—what is left of the contextualist element of inferential contextualism? Everything now depends on whether methodological necessities really are variable across (non-sceptical) contexts in the way that Williams suggests, since without this claim there is nothing specifically contextualist about his proposal. But we have already seen that this is highly dubious. A conviction in the reality of the past is not merely a hinge commitment of historical inquiry, but of *any* inquiry. And we can explain this via our Wittgensteinian account in terms of how this commitment codifies the *über* hinge commitment. Hinge commitments on this view are never optional, nor are they, relatedly, the kind of commitment that comes and goes as one switches from one investigation to another.

This brings us to a final point of contrast between inferential contextualism and our Wittgensteinian proposal, which is that Williams's view seems completely unable to resist *epistemic relativism*. By epistemic relativism I have in mind the possibility of a specifically epistemic incommensurability, such that two agents have completely different hinge commitments and hence employ two completely distinct systems of rational evaluation. The upshot would be that where these two systems come into conflict, both agents could form their conflicting beliefs rationally and there is no way, even in principle, to rationally resolve their dispute.[13]

Far from being an undesirable possibility that Williams wishes to avoid, epistemic relativism seems instead to be a straightforward *consequence* of inferential contextualism as he understands this view. Here is Williams on just this point:

> As a rule, when people's beliefs differ profoundly, there is no guarantee that there will be neutral epistemic principles for determining who is right and who is wrong. (Williams 2007, 111)

Here we have a straightforward endorsement of what we are here calling epistemic incommensurability, and hence epistemic relativism.[14]

Note, however, that epistemic relativism, so conceived, is *not* a direct consequence of the Wittgensteinian account of the structure of rational evaluation, at least not as we have developed this view. That all rational evaluation takes place relative to hinge commitments is entirely compatible with there being a great deal of overlap in subjects' hinge commitments, even when they are from very different cultures. So the question we need to ask is whether there can be radical divergence in one's hinge commitments. Inferential contextualism seems committed to allowing this, at least to the extent that we can make sense of this proposal as a contextualist thesis at all, but insofar as we reject inferential contextualism then the way is at least open to denying this possibility.

Interestingly, there are passages in *On Certainty* that suggest that Wittgenstein himself wanted to limit the extent to which there can be divergence of hinge commitments. In particular, he suggests that a divergence of hinge commitments that was too great would be incompatible with one's thoughts even being intelligible. Consider these passages:

> The truth of my statements is the test of my understanding of these statements. That is to say: if I make certain false statements, it becomes uncertain whether I understand them. (OC, §§80-1)

> In order to make a mistake, a man must already judge in conformity with mankind. (OC, §156)

If this is right, then we can at least count on a dispute between two agents who are intelligible to one another as involving a shared background of beliefs, and hence as having shared hinge commitments. There is thus no inherent reason why epistemic incommensurability should be possible on this view. That is, while there will be all the usual practical problems associated with resolving entrenched disagreements, it seems we can avoid the in principle problems posed by epistemic incommensurability, and which lead to epistemic relativism.[15]

## 4. TWO SOURCES OF SCEPTICISM

This brings us to the second point on which Williams's anti-scepticism goes awry, which is his failure to see that there are two sceptical problems in play here, one which trades on the closure principle and a second formulation which trades on the underdetermination principle. To be fair, Williams is not alone in overlooking this point, in that it is common in the contemporary literature

on radical scepticism to run together two formulations of the problem.

We begin with the closure-based formulation of the sceptical problem, since this has now become the most common formulation of the problem in the literature. We will focus our attention on rationally grounded knowledge, in order to side-step issues that might arise with knowledge that lacks a rational grounding.[16] In order to simplify things, we will formulate the sceptical problem as it concerns an agent's rationally grounded knowledge of an 'everyday' empirical proposition ('E'), the kind of proposition which is typically thought to be known, and where the belief in question is regarded as rationally grounded. If one has rationally grounded knowledge of these everyday empirical propositions, then the challenge posed by radical scepticism is illusory. We will also focus on a specific radical sceptical hypothesis which is by stipulation incompatible with E—*viz.*, the hypothesis that, unbeknownst to one, one is a brain-in-a-vat (BIV) being 'fed' one's experiences by supercomputers.

With these stipulations in mind, here is the closure-based radical sceptical paradox:

*The Closure-Based Radical Sceptical Paradox*

($S_1$1) One cannot have rationally grounded knowledge that one is not a BIV.

($S_1$2) If one cannot have rationally grounded knowledge that one is not a BIV, then one cannot have rationally grounded knowledge that E.

($S_1$3) I have rationally grounded knowledge that E.[17]

($S_1$1) is motivated by the general thought that one cannot have rationally grounded knowledge that one is not the victim of a radical sceptical hypothesis. Given that, *ex hypothesi*, one cannot distinguish between one's ordinary experiences and the corresponding experiences that one would have if one were a BIV, then how could one have a rational basis for knowing that one is not a BIV?[18] ($S_1$3) is motivated by the general anti-sceptical thought noted above that E-type propositions are widely known, where this knowledge is rationally grounded.

That leaves us with the second claim, ($S_1$2). This is motivated by appeal to the following principle:

*The Closure Principle*

If *S* has rationally grounded knowledge that *p*, and *S* competently deduces from *p* that *q*, thereby forming a belief that *q* on this basis while retaining her rationally grounded knowledge that *p*, then *S* has rationally grounded knowledge that *q*.

With the closure principle in play, it follows that if one did have rationally grounded knowledge that E, then one could competently deduce from this knowledge that one is not a BIV, and thereby acquire rationally grounded knowledge that one is not a BIV.[19] Conversely, if it is already granted that one simply cannot have rationally grounded knowledge that one is not a BIV, it follows that one cannot have rationally grounded knowledge that E either. We thus get ($S_1$2).

The guiding thought behind the closure principle is that competent deduction is a paradigm instance of a rational process. Accordingly, any belief which is grounded on a competent deduction from rationally grounded knowledge—and where the original rationally grounded knowledge is preserved throughout the deduction—cannot be itself any less rationally grounded. There are, of course, weaker formulations of closure-style principles in this general vein in the literature, and some of them have been rejected for various reasons.[20] But it is hard to see how one could motivate a rejection of the principle as just formulated, which is why the debate about closure-based radical scepticism is now generally targeted on this specific formulation. How could one have rationally grounded knowledge, competently deduce a belief on this basis (while retaining the original rationally grounded knowledge), and yet lack rationally grounded knowledge of the proposition deduced? At the very least, any anti-sceptical strategy that proceeds by rejecting this principle will face a steep up-hill task.

Since the three claims that make up this paradox are in logical conflict with one another, so we know that at least one of them must be false. But since they are all highly intuitive, or at least supported by highly intuitive claims (such as the closure principle), it is hard to see which is to go.

Next, consider the second way of expressing the radical sceptical paradox, which turns on the underdetermination principle:

*The Underdetermination-Based Radical Sceptical Paradox*

($S_2$1) One cannot have a rational basis that favours one's belief that E over the BIV scenario.

($S_2$2) If one cannot have a rational basis that favours one's belief that E over the BIV scenario, then one lacks rationally grounded knowledge that E.

($S_2$3) I have rationally grounded knowledge that E.[21]

As with the closure-based formulation of the radical sceptical paradox, these three claims are clearly in logical conflict, and hence we know that at least one of them must be false. The final claim that makes up the underdetermination-based radical sceptical paradox is identical to the final claim that makes up the closure-based radical sceptical paradox, so we can focus our attention on the other two.

The first claim, ($S_2$1), captures a widely held commitment in epistemology to the so-called *new evil demon intuition*. Consider two agents. The first is in normal epistemic conditions—call this the *good case*. The second, in contrast, is an identical counterpart of the first but unfortunately the victim of a radical sceptical hypothesis (such as the BIV hypothesis)—call this the *bad case*. It is by stipulation impossible for either subject to distinguish between their experiences and those had by their counterpart. The new evil demon intuition is the claim that the first agent in the good case cannot have a better rational basis for her beliefs than her counterpart in the bad case does for her corresponding beliefs. After all, given that the good and bad cases are indistinguishable to the

subjects concerned, how could the agent in the good case have a better rational standing for her beliefs than her counterpart in the bad case?[22]

The second claim in the underdetermination-based formulation of radical scepticism, ($S_2$2), is meant to be derived from the following underdetermination principle:

> *The Underdetermination Principle*
> If *S* knows that *p* and *q* describe incompatible scenarios, and yet *S* lacks a rational basis that favours belief that *p* over *q*, then *S* lacks rationally grounded knowledge that *p*.

With this principle in play, it follows that if one lacks a rational basis which favours E over the BIV alternative, then one lacks rationally support knowledge that E. We thus get ($S_2$2).

The underdetermination principle is meant to be entirely uncontentious. Consider what it would mean for it to be false. This would entail that one could have rationally grounded knowledge of a proposition even while recognising that the proposition believed was incompatible with an alternative scenario and that one's rational basis for one's belief didn't favour it over the alternative scenario. An example might be having rationally grounded knowledge that one is seated even while recognising that one has no better reason for thinking that one is seated than that one is standing (a known to be incompatible alternative). Although there might be some dispute over what is involved in having rationally grounded knowledge, we would surely want a conception of this kind of knowledge such that it excluded this possibility.

These two formulations of the radical sceptical paradox are clearly very similar. They share a claim, and the sceptical challenge posed in each case is the same. Moreover, they can each be formulated in terms of a conflict between our rationally grounded knowledge of an everyday proposition, E, and an epistemic lack which is exposed by radical sceptical hypotheses, in this case the BIV hypothesis. Crucially, however, these two formulations of the sceptical problem are logically distinct, and this is because the epistemic demands made by the two epistemic principles on which they turn are subtly different.

We can evaluate the relative logical strengths of these two epistemic principles by considering, in a simplified and analogous fashion, what each principle demands in the particular case of a subject's belief that E in the context of the BIV sceptical hypothesis:

> *The Simplified Closure-Based Entailment*
> If *S* has rationally grounded knowledge that E, then *S* has rationally grounded knowledge that she is not a BIV.

> *The Simplified Underdetermination-Based Entailment*
> If *S* has rationally grounded knowledge that E, then *S* has rational support for her belief that E which favours that belief over the sceptical alternative that she is a BIV.

I take it that the simplified closure-based entailment is an obvious, and uncontentious, simplification of what the closure principle demands in this case. That the simplified underdetermination-based entailment is a simplification of what the underdetermination principle demands is not so obvious, but that is because we are effectively working with a contraposed version of the principle. Uncontraposed, the entailment would be that if one lacks a rational basis which favours belief that E over the alternative sceptical scenario that one is a BIV, then one lacks rationally grounded knowledge that E. The reason why it is useful to work with a contraposed version of this claim is that the underdetermination-based entailment will then share its antecedent with the simplified closure-based entailment. We can thus focus our attention on what is entailed in each case.

With the entailments generated by the underdetermination and closure principles simplified in this way, we can detect one obvious difference between them. This is that whereas the simplified closure-based entailment demands that one has rationally grounded knowledge that one is *not* a BIV, the simplified underdetermination-based entailment merely demands that one has a rational basis which favours belief that E over the BIV alternative. The former claim is much more demanding than the latter claim, in that one can have better reasons for believing E rather than the BIV hypothesis without thereby possessing rationally grounded knowledge that one is *not* a BIV. In particular, while having better reason to believe that E as opposed to the BIV hypothesis plausibly entails that one has *some* reason for believing that one is not a BIV, it would be a stretch to maintain that this *by itself* entails that one has rationally grounded *knowledge* that one is not a BIV (even granted that the entailed belief in question will be true). There is thus a strong *prima facie* basis for arguing that the underdetermination principle is logically weaker than the closure principle, in the sense that from the same antecedent the former principle extracts a logically weaker consequent.

This point is confirmed once we reflect on the logical relationships in the other direction—*viz.*, from the closure principle to the underdetermination principle. For notice that if one has rationally grounded knowledge that E, and one thereby has rationally grounded knowledge, via the closure principle, that one is not a BIV, then of course one inevitably has a rational basis for which favours E over the alternative sceptical scenario that is a BIV. One has, after all, rationally grounded knowledge that one is *not* a BIV. The closure principle is thus more demanding than the underdetermination principle.

What this means for our dealings with the two formulations of the sceptical argument is not straightforward, since it depends on what anti-sceptical strategy one opts for. For example, if we were to approach underdetermination-based scepticism by denying the underdetermination principle, then that would obviously suggest a response to closure-based scepticism which

involved denying the closure principle. But if one opts to retain the underdetermination principle, then there would be various options available for dealing with closure-based scepticism. In any case, the crux of the matter is that we need to be sensitive to the subtle differences between these formulations of scepticism, and that this works against Williams's treatment of the problem.

In particular, notice that the difference between the two formulations of the sceptical problem reflect two distinct motivations for scepticism, even though the sceptical upshot is the same. Closure-based scepticism arises out of a commitment to what we might term the *universality of rational evaluation*, where this involves the thought that there are no in principle limitations on the scope of rational evaluation. This commitment is revealed in the fact that via closure-based inferences we can, it seems, harmlessly shift our focus from local rational evaluations to global rational evaluations, as when we query the rational basis of our hinge commitments. Underdetermination-based scepticism, in contrast, is concerned with what we might term the *insularity of reasons*, where this is the claim that the rational support that our beliefs enjoy, even in the best case, can be no better than the rational support enjoyed by our envatted counterparts. It is only with this commitment in play that the underdetermination principle can generate the advertised sceptical conclusion.[23]

I have argued elsewhere that we should reject both of these underlying claims.[24] What is important for our present purposes, however, is that the way in which one motivates a denial of these claims is very different, as reflecting the fact that they are distinct sceptical sources leading to logically distinct formulations of the sceptical problem. It should be clear that Wittgenstein is offering us a straightforward way of denying the universality of rational evaluation thesis. In particular, he is proposing an alternative conception of how rational evaluation functions, one which is essentially constrained by our necessarily groundless hinge commitments.

Does that mean that Wittgenstein is obliged to deny the closure principle? I don't think so. The crux of the matter is that we need to take seriously how Wittgenstein characterises our hinge commitments as animal and visceral, in the sense that while they involve complete certainty in the target proposition they are neither the product of rational processes (e.g., they are not taught) nor are they ever responsive to rational considerations. Many interpreters of Wittgenstein don't take this aspect of our hinge commitments at face-value, and that's why they end up characterising them in such a way that allows for a degree of intellectual distance between us and the hinge propositions that we are committed to. So, for example, some commentators—most notably Crispin Wright (e.g., 2004)—characterise hinge commitments in terms of notions like acceptance or trust, propositional attitudes which are entirely compatible with agnosticism regarding the target proposition.[25] Other commentators, such as Williams himself (as we saw above), characterise our hinge commitments as being, at least sometimes anyway, essentially optional (as when one can in

principle change one's hinge commitments simply by taking off one's lab coat). But this is clearly not what Wittgenstein had in mind.

This point is important, since if we do take Wittgenstein's own description of hinge commitments seriously then it becomes clear that our hinge commitments simply aren't beliefs, at least not in the sense of belief that we have in mind when we think of the propositional attitude that is a constituent part of rationally grounded knowledge. Belief in this sense, after all, does bear certain basic conceptual connections to reason and truth, and is more than just an out-and-out commitment to the target proposition. (That's why wishful thinking is not the same as believing, at least not in this sense of belief anyway). But this means that the closure principle that the sceptic appeals to in formulating closure-based scepticism is simply inapplicable to our hinge commitments. After all, this is a principle which is concerned with the acquisition of rationally grounded knowledge (and hence belief in the relevant sense) on the basis of the paradigmatically rational process of competent deduction. Neither is compatible with the notion of a hinge commitment if we follow Wittgenstein's description of it, and hence we do not need to reject closure as it simply cannot be employed in the service of scepticism. The closure-based formulation of the sceptical paradox described above is thus not a genuine paradox at all, in that one cannot employ the closure principle to motivate the bridging claim at issue in ($S_1$2).[26]

Since Williams doesn't stay true to Wittgenstein's own characterisation of hinge commitments, he fails to see that there is this route out of closure-based scepticism. It thus becomes important to him to champion the kind of contextualism that we saw above to be problematic in order to show that the sceptic's achievements are mitigated by being relative to a sceptical context of inquiry. But a bigger mistake that Williams makes is to try to extract from the Wittgensteinian account of the structure of rational evaluation not just an answer to closure-based scepticism but also, in effect, underdetermination-based scepticism as well, via his rejection of epistemological realism and epistemic priority. We should be immediately suspicious of such a move. Why couldn't it be the case that all rational evaluation is essentially local *and* that reasons are essentially insular? For example, perhaps it is both the case that all rational evaluation is local *and* that propositions regarding one's mental states have an epistemic priority relative to propositions concerning one's environment? There seems no obvious way of deriving the denial of the latter from the acceptance of the former. And yet that is precisely what Williams attempts to do.

The foregoing is of course consistent with the idea that if we only added a rejection of epistemological realism, and the epistemic priority thesis that (Williams claims) goes with it, to the Wittgensteinian account, then we would have an anti-sceptical response which dealt with both formulations of the sceptical paradox. If this were right, then Williams could at least salvage something from this anti-sceptical strategy. Unfortunately, even this redescribed version of

Williams' anti-sceptical strategy, such that it consists of two distinct anti-sceptical theses, doesn't work.

We will focus on epistemic priority in this regard, since this is clearly the thesis that holds the whip hand in this regard as far as Williams is concerned. That is, he wants to renounce epistemological realism since it licences epistemic priority, where epistemic priority leads to radical scepticism and so has to go. Would the rejection of epistemic priority suffice to block the underdetermination-based radical sceptical paradox?

This might initially look quite plausible, in that one might think that if it is sometimes—as part of a particular context of inquiry—legitimate to rationally infer claims about one's mental states from claims about the external world, then this must be in conflict with the insularity of reasons thesis, and hence with underdetermination-based radical scepticism. But this train of reasoning does not stand up to closer scrutiny. This is because it is in fact entirely consistent with the rejection of epistemic priority that the insularity of reasons thesis holds.

Suppose it is true, for example, that in certain psychological contexts of inquiry it may be legitimate to make inferences about one's mental states from claims about the external world. Why should it follow from this that the insularity of reasons thesis is false? For notice that the latter claim is specifically about whether the rational support we have for our beliefs is necessarily compatible with the possibility that one's beliefs are radically in error (i.e., such that we are rationally no better off than our envatted counterpart, who is radically in error). Why should it follow from the fact that a particular belief about one's mental states can be rationally inferred from a particular belief about the external world that this latter possibility is excluded? In itself, all this shows is that some of our beliefs about our mental states might have a weaker epistemic pedigree than some of our beliefs about the external world, but there is nothing in this claim which is in conflict with the insularity of reasons thesis.

More generally, in rejecting the insularity of reasons thesis we are not thereby rejecting epistemic priority. Rejecting the insularity of reasons thesis means allowing that that the rational support enjoyed by our everyday beliefs can potentially exclude the possibility that we are in radical error, but this is entirely consistent with thinking of the direction of rational support in play as being from mind to world. Indeed, as we will see in a moment, there is a way of thinking about our reflectively accessible rational support such that it offers the favouring anti-sceptical support that we need to block the insularity of reasons thesis and thereby deal with underdetermination-based radical scepticism, but which is nonetheless entirely compatible with epistemic priority.

It seems, then, that denying epistemic priority is neither necessary nor sufficient for blocking underdetermination-based scepticism. It follows that Williams has not only misdiagnosed

the source of scepticism in virtue of failing to distinguish between the closure-based and underdetermination-based versions of this problem, but also misunderstood the extent to which the sceptical problem (of either form) essentially trades upon epistemic priority, and thus epistemological realism.

While Williams does go wrong on this point, I think his philosophical instincts are sound. He clearly would regard the insularity of reasons thesis as dubious, and he's right to do so. The way to deny this thesis, however, is not to become sidetracked in discussions about epistemological realism or epistemic priority—much less contextualism—but rather to embrace *epistemological disjunctivism*. This is the view that our everyday practices of offering factive reasons—e.g., that *one sees that p*—in support of our perceptual beliefs in paradigmatic epistemic conditions should be taken at face-value (as oppposed to being rejected for dubious philosophical reasons). With this account in hand, there is a striaghtforward sense in which the insularity of reasons thesis is false, since in the right conditions one can have supporting perceptual reasons available to one which actually *entail* the target propoisition (unlike one's envatted counterpart, who clearly will not enjoy rational support of this nature). Epistemological disjunctivism is thus the antidote to underdetermination-based scepticism, in that it offers a direct undercutting response to this variety of scepticism. Notice too that one can perfectly well characterise the rational support provided for one's perceptual knowledge by one's seeing that *p* as being of a mind-to-world kind, to there is no straightforward route from epistemological disjunctivism to the denial of epistemic priorty.[27]

Of course, I cannot hope to offer a defence of epistemological disjunctivism here, much less to defend the idea that epsitemological disjunctivism can be combined with a Wittgensteinian epistemology to deal with both closure and underdetermination-based scepticism (though I have argued extensively for both claims elsewhere). My point is rather that once we recognise that these two formulations of radical scepticism are not just logically distinct, but also trade on discrete sources of scepticism, then it follows that our response to the problem of radical scepticism will need to be more subtle than Williams supposes. A Wittgensteinian epistemology—at least if construed in the way that I have proposed, rather than along inferential contextualist lines—offers us a compelling way of dealing with closure-based radical scepticism by enabling us to reject the universality of rational evalaution thesis while nontheless keeping closure intact. But it crucially doesn't offer us any straightforward purchase on underdetermination-based scepticism as Williams supposes. To offer an undercutting response to this form of radical scepticism we need to reject the insularity of reasons thesis, and that requires one to motivate epistemological disjunctivism. The cure for epistemic *angst* thus doesn't lie in Williams's inferential contextualism, but rather requries the kind of *biscopic* approach to the problem that allies a Wittgensteinian epistemology to epistemological disjunscitivm. Radical scepticism certainly does involve 'unnatural doubts', but the

source of their peculiarity is not quite as Williams supposes.[28]

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# NOTES

[1] Note that henceforth when I refer to radical scepticism without qualification, it will be specifically Cartesian radical scepticism that I have in mind.

[2] My reasons for describing Williams's contextualism as inferential is to distinguish it from the *attributer/semantic contextualism*—e.g., as defended by DeRose (1995) and Lewis (1996)—that often gets listed alongside Williams's view, even though the two proposals are very different. See Pritchard (2002*a*; 2002*b*).

[3] Although the "hinge" metaphor is the dominant symbolism in the book, it is accompanied by various other metaphors, such as the following: that these propositions constitute the "scaffolding" of our thoughts (OC, §211); that they form the "foundations of our language-games" (OC, §§401-3); and also that they represent the implicit "world-picture" from within which we inquire, the "inherited background against which [*we*] distinguish between true and false" (OC, §§94-5).

[4] This point marks an important contrast between Wittgenstein's anti-scepticism and the superficially similar response to scepticism offered by Austin (1961). They are similar in that both emphasise the differences between sceptical doubt and everyday doubt. As Stroud (1984) so persuasively argued, however, it is open to the proponent of radical scepticism to embrace these differences while nonetheless maintaining that sceptical doubt is a *purified* version of everyday doubt (i.e., once the latter is stripped of purely pragmatic limitations, such as imagination, time, opportunity, ingenuity, and so on). Unlike Austin, however, Wittgenstein blocks even this move by demonstrating that the difference between sceptical doubt and everyday doubt is not a differences of degree but rather of kind, where one moves from a style of rational evaluation which is coherent to one which is simply incoherent. For further discussion of this point, see Pritchard (2011*b*; 2014*b*; 2015*a*, part two; *forthcoming*b).

[5] For a recent discussion of the distinction between undercutting and overriding anti-sceptical strategies, and its dialectical significance, see Pritchard (2015*a*, part one).

[6] For a different characterisation of Williams's conception of epistemic priority, see Ribeiro (2002).

[7] A good point of comparison in this regard—a comparison which Williams himself draws—is the contextualist account of justification offered by Annis (1978).

[8] Or, at the very least, Williams regards closure-based radical scepticism as simply being a variant of underdetermination-based radical scepticism rather than logically distinct, where the latter connects most directly with the 'veil of perception', and thus with issues concerning epistemic priority which are Williams's focus. See, for example, Williams (1991, ch. 8) where he discusses the former form of radical scepticism in some detail. See also Williams (2010, 196).

[9] Not least that it enables us to deal with closure-based radical scepeticism, as we will see below.

[10] This won't come as a surprise to Williams, for he is quite explicit that his notion of a methodological necessity, while inspired by Wittgenstein's remarks on hinge commitments in *On Certainty*, is not meant to be an interpretation of this notion. See Williams (1991, ch. 1).

[11] Similar points apply to other putative methodological necessities of historical inquiry (or, for that matter, any other specific inquiry). Consider, for example, Williams's claim that one such methodological necessity of this kind of inquiry concerns the general veracity of historical documentation. Notice that if there were a systematic deception in play with regard to all 'official' testimony regarding the past, then that would almost certainly be in conflict with one's *über* hinge commitment. A commitment to the absence of such a systematic deception is thus a plausible manifestation of one's general *über* hinge commitment. It follows that one will tend to regard historical documentation as generally veracious. By casting the commitment in question as being specifically concerned with *historical* documentation, Williams makes it look as if this is a commitment that is peculiar to a particular context of inquiry. But closer inspection of the kind of commitment in play reveals that it is no such thing, but rather just the manifestation of the more general *über* hinge commitment.

[12] See, for example, DeRose (1995) and Lewis (1996).

[13] That his conception of the structure of rational evaluation might lead to epistemic relativism of this kind is certainly a problem that Wittgenstein grapples with in *On Certainty*. Consider, for example, this famous passage:

> "Where two principles really do meet which cannot be reconciled with one another, then each man declares the other a fool and a heretic.
>
> I said I would 'combat', the other man,—but wouldn't I give him *reasons*? Certainly; but how far do they go? At the end of reasons comes *persuasion*. (Think of what happens when missionaries convert natives)." (OC, §§611-12)

I explore Wittgenstein's treatment of epistemic relativism in more detail in Pritchard (2010). See also Pritchard (2009). Note that there are interesting issues here regarding Wittgenstein's broader approach to the epistemology of religious belief and how this inter-relates both with his views about hinge commitments and with topics such as epistemic relativism. See Pritchard (2011*a*; 2015*b*).

[14] Oddly, later on in the very same page cited here Williams seems to assert the very *opposite* of this claim and deny that there can be epistemic incommensurability. I discuss Williams's ambivalent approach to these issues, including the logical tension between these two passages, at length in Pritchard (2010). See also endnote 15.

[15] It should be noted that Williams's views on how inferential contextualism and epistemic relativism inter-relate are complex. He has argued at length that the former is in fact the "antidote" to the latter (see Williams 2007), and yet as we have noted he also seems to endorse epistemic incommensurability, which is the very kind of thing which generates epistemic relativism. I explore Williams's account of how inferential contextualism relates to epistemic relativism in detail in Pritchard (2010). See also endnote 14.

[16] For further discussion of why the sceptical problem is best understood in terms of rationally grounded knowledge, see Pritchard (2015*a*, part one).

[17] Note that this formulation of radical scepticism is in fact much stronger than we need to generate the sceptical paradox. In particular, in terms of ($S_1$1), it would suffice, for example, that one *does not*—as opposed to the stronger *cannot*—have rationally grounded knowledge that one is not a BIV. Relatedly, it would suffice for ($S_1$2) that it follows from one's lack of rationally grounded knowledge that one is not a BIV that one lacks rationally grounded knowledge that E.

[18] Note that in order to keep matters simple I am setting to one side those responses to radical scepticism—e.g., Vogel (1990)—which claim that we have an *abductive* rational basis for preferring our everyday beliefs over sceptical alternatives. I critically discuss such a proposal in Pritchard (2015*a*, ch. 1).

[19] Note that here, and in what follows, we are taking it as given that one knows that E entails that one is not a BIV.

[20] In particular, the most famous rejections of closure-style principles as a means of blocking radical scepticism—due to Dretske (1970) and Nozick (1981)—have been concerned with much weaker formulations of the closure principle, and hence do not straightforwardly apply to the closure principle as we have formulated it here. For a useful recent exchange on the status of closure-style principles, see Dretske (2005*a*; 2005*b*) and Hawthorne (2005).

[21] As with our formulation of the closure-based radical sceptical paradox above—see footnote 17—note that this formulation of radical scepticism is in fact much stronger than we need to generate the sceptical paradox. In particular, in terms of ($S_2$1), it would suffice, for example, that one *does not*—as opposed to the stronger *cannot*—have a rational basis which favours one's belief that E over the BIV scenario. Relatedly, it would suffice for ($S_2$2) that it follows from one's lack of such a favouring rational basis that one lacks rationally grounded knowledge that E.

[22] The *loci classici* as regards the new evil demon intuition are Lehrer & Cohen (1983) and Cohen (1984).

[23] For further discussion and defence of the idea that closure-based radical scepticism and underdetermination-based radical scpticism are logically distinct, and that they reflect two distinct sources of scepticism, see Pritchard (2015*a*, part one). See also Pritchard (2005*a*, part one; 2005*b*; *forthcominga*).

[24] See especially Pritchard (2015*a*). See also Pritchard (*forthcominga*).

[25] I critically explore Wright's conception of hinge commitments in more detail in Pritchard (2014*a*). See also Pritchard (2012*b*).

[26] For more on this point, see Pritchard (2012*b*; 2014*a*; 2015*a*, part two; *forthcominga*).

[27] Though of course the epistemological disjunctivist's conception of the mental realm is bound to be very different to the standard Cartesian conception. Epistemological disjunctivism is rooted in the work of McDowell (1995). For a full defence of this position, including its application to underdetermination-based scetpiciam, see Pritchard (2015*a*). See also Pritchard (2008; 2012*a*).

[28] Acknowledgements.